city, town

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

state

date entered

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms Type all entries—complete applicable sections Name Ladd Field historic and or common Fort Wainwright Location not for publication street & number Fairbanks  $\stackrel{\displaystyle extstyle X}{\scriptstyle extstyle L}$  vicinity of city, town 090 Alaska 02 Fairbanks North Star code state county code Classification Status **Present Use** Ownership Category X occupied X district \_X public \_\_\_\_ agriculture museum \_ park \_\_\_\_ unoccupied \_\_\_ building(s) \_\_\_ private \_ commercial \_ work in progress \_ educational \_\_ structure both private residence Accessible \_\_\_ site **Public Acquisition** entertainment religious \_ government \_X\_ yes: restricted \_ scientific \_ object \_\_ in process \_\_\_ yes: unrestricted industrial \_ being considered \_ transportation X military other: no Owner of Property name United States Army street & number Alaska 99707 state city, town Fort Wainwright **Location of Legal Description** Director of Facilities, HQ 172d Infantry Brigade (AK), courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Engineering (AFZT-FE-PS) street & number Fort Richardson state Alaska 99505 city, town Representation in Existing Surveys None has this property been determined eligible? title \_\_ county \_\_\_ local \_ state depository for survey records

### 7. Description

Condition  X excellent deteriorated  good ruins  fair unexposed	Check one unaltered _X altered	Check one _Xoriginal site moved date	
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Construction at Ladd Field, the first U.S. Army airfield in Alaska, began in the fall of 1938. Named in honor of Maj. Arthur K. Ladd, killed in an aircraft accident in South Carolina in 1935, it was built just east of Fairbanks, Alaska. The first Army Air Corps troops arrived at the field in April 1940. Its World War II facilities were designed to fulfill three missions: cold weather experimental station, air depot for repair and testing of aircraft, and the principal base in Alaska for the Air Transport Command.

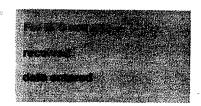
Today, it is an army installation, Fort Wainwright, and facilities have greatly expanded with the erection of modern barracks, family housing, medical center, administrative centers, and other structures. The core of the original field, including the permanent garrison, hangars, and runways, remains relatively intact and is maintained in good condition. Both the U.S. Army and the Bureau of Land Management make use of these structures, but a few buildings are presently unoccupied. Several features of wartime activities that were located around the periphery of the field are no longer extant: a temporary 500-man transient camp for Russian and American aircrews; Coast Artillery (antiaircraft) garrison area; air depot and troop housing area; and Quartermaster Corps housing. A satellite runway, 26 miles to the southeast (and called "Mile 26 Field") is now fully developed Eielson Air Force Base.

Permanent Garrison. The first thing to be built at the new site was a three-mile spur of The Alaska Railroad from Fairbanks to deliver construction material. This spur exists and is maintained in good condition. Because of the extremely cold winters in Interior Alaska, all structures for the original garrison were permanent in nature. Officers' quarters are arranged in a horseshoe, centered on an open lawn. Three of these (1047, 1049, and 1051) are frame, two-story, apartment-type quarters and date from 1941. A similar-type structure (1045) was the early administrative center and is now a guest house. Next to it, but dating from 1945, is an attractive-appearing automobile garage. In the center of the horseshoe is Quarters No. 1, the commanding officer's house. This handsome, two-story, frame structure, surrounded by a white picket fence and a ring of trees, was the envy of all army officers in Alaska, both higher and lower rank than the occupant.

The horseshoe is today surrounded by many more sets of quarters of later construction, but among them are three from the early 1940s: nurses' quarters (1021), east of the guest house, a one-story, frame building constructed before 1943 (but carried in the records today as dating from 1946) and presently vacant; radio station (1024), one-story, frame, cottage-type building pre-dating 1943, although current records date it from 1945 (local tradition holds this building to have been the residence of the head of the Russian mission at Ladd, but no supporting evidence has yet been found); and a standard-plan military chapel, constructed in 1944.

The legs of the horseshoe and the open space between them extend southward, across a street into the industrial area. This open space no longer has a flag staff but a monument to Lt. Gen. Jonathan M. Wainwright has been emplaced

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number 7. Description

Page

2

there. East of this former parade ground is a large, U-shaped, two-story post hospital (1555), constructed during a major expansion in 1943. In later years, this structure served as post headquarters; today, it houses the Bureau of Land Management's Alaska Fire Service. East of the hospital is a former aircraft maintenance shop (1541), now an addition to a large Bureau of Land Management administration/visitor center building. While present-day building records state the shop was built in 1942, a 1943 army map does not show it.

West of the parade are three wartime structures: A two-story building with a one-story wing at each end (a long ell at the rear no longer exists); the wartime function of this building (1562) was possibly administrative while today it is called Kluge Hall and contains administrative offices and a thrift shop. South of it stands the all-important wartime power and heating plant (1561), not presently in operation. Next to the plant is a wartime community center (1560), constructed in 1941 and enlarged in 1943.

Many of the first buildings at Ladd retain their original, and distinctive, copper roofs. Another unusal feature was a network of underground utilities corridors. Those corridors in the vicinity of the officers' quarters, parade ground, and Hangar No. 1 are of sufficient size (7 by 9 feet) to allow persons to walk underground during cold winter weather.

#### Airfield

South of the industrial area, the airfield proper begins. Adjacent to the parade is the huge, metal-clad Hangar No. 1, the first to be completed at Ladd, in 1941. On its north and south sides are two-story "lean-tos" containing offices and shops. This imposing hangar is now vacant. west, and south of the hangar are extensive concrete or earthen aircraft parking areas where, later, planes destined for the Soviet Union received final Beyond them is the first of two parallel runways at Ladd Field. preparation. In 1941, this reinforced-concrete runway was 5,000 feet in length. gravel extensions had been laid at each end, giving a total length of over 9,000 These extensions were later paved. Also in 1943, the second, paved runway, 9,000 by 150 feet, as well as additional parking areas, taxiways, and hardstands were under construction. Two Kodiak, T-type hangars (1542 and 1543) were erected at the end of the parking area east of Hangar No. 1. Said to have been used only by the cold weather test station, these hangars have

<sup>1.</sup> Today's army building records state it was originally a community center. The writer feels uneasy about the term which was not in common use at the time and because of the building's location--between the power plant and a hangar.

### National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only received date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7. Description

Page

. 3

been permitted to the Bureau of Land Management for fire suppression activities. 2

In the 1943 expansion program for Ladd, three Birchwood-type hangars were authorized for the south side of the enlarged field. These nearly-identical structures are extant, but their locations are somewhat different than originally planned: Hangar No. 2 (3008), Hangar No. 3 (3005), and Hangar No. 6 (2085). They were completed ca. 1944. All three have been modernized and are in excellent condition. Today, they house army helicopters. Also on the south side of the field are two sets of double hangars, Nos. 4 and 5 (2106) and 7 and 8 (2077) that were erected at the same time. Considering the many changes in missions over the past 45 years, the overall integrity of the original Ladd field structures is remarkable.

The significant historical features at former Ladd Field are:

Officers' quarters on the horseshoe, nos. 1047, 1049, and 1051; also, the commanding officer's quarters, no. 1.

Early administrative center (present guest house), no. 1045.

Automobile garage, no. 10.

Former nurses' quarters, no. 1021.

Radio station, no. 1024.

Former post hospital, no. 1555.

Former aircraft maintenance shop, no. 1541.

Strcuture no. 1562 (Kluge Hall).

Former power and heating plant, no. 1561.

Former "community center," no. 1560.

Hangar no. 1.

Two parallel runways, including parking areas, taxiways, and hardstands.

<sup>2.</sup> Both hangars were surveyed in 1980 for possible demolition.

### National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only received date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7. Description

Page

4

Two Kodiak hangars, nos. 1542 and 1543.

Three Birchwood hangars, nos. 3008, 3005, and 2085.

Two double hangars, nos. 2106 and 2077.

Chapel, no. 1043.

### 8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1799 1800–1899 1900–	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric agriculture architecture art commerce communications	_ community planning conservation economics education	Indscape architecture Iaw Iiterature X military music philosophy politics government	religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	1938-1945	Builder Architect		

#### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Ladd Field was established in 1940 originally as a **c**old Weather Test Station at the insistance of Maj. Gen. H.H. Arnold, Chief of the Army Air Corps. Here, at Alaska's first army airfield, vital lessons were learned in wing-icing, navigation, aircraft maintenance and operation, instruments and controls, radio communication, cold-weather clothing, armament, and a wide variety of other investigations for operating aircraft in arctic-like conditions. As the Japanese prepared to invade the Aleutians in 1942, the Eleventh Air Force established an Air Depot at Ladd Field for the repair, testing, and supply of aircraft in the Alaska Theater. And, beginning in 1942, Ladd Field b'ecame the center of the "Alsib [Alaska/Siberia] Movement," wherein nearly 8,000 military aircraft from the United States were transferred to Russian aircrews for use on the Russian Front. Despite Alaska's cruel winters this air ferry route came to be preferred over the longer Miami-Iraq-Moscow route. Soviet diplomats and missions also traveled through Ladd Field during the war en route to and from the Soviet Union and the United States.

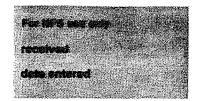
#### Cold Weather Test Station

Well before he became chief of the Army Air Corps, Maj. Gen. H.H. ("Hap") Arnold recognized the importance of establishing a cold weather test station in Alaska to experiment in adapting planes, personnel, equipment, and base facilities to operate successfully in deep cold temperatures such as are experienced in Interior Alaska. As chief, he persuaded the War Department to complete a site survey in the summer of 1938. A site was chosen  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles east of Fairbanks (postwar growth has brought city development up to the base's boundary) and by autumn the Quartermaster Corps had begun construction with a civilian crew that eventually grew to 1,200 men.

An early experiment concerned how best to construct a 5,000-foot runway that would not heave in freezing and thawing conditions. A promising solution was to remove two feet of topsoil then put in one foot of unwashed gravel. Concrete, reinforced with steel, was poured over this base. (Local citizens persuaded the Army to use thawing techniques rather than attempting to blast the frozen tundra.) This method proved quite successful, although the runways have been upgraded and reconstructed in the subsequent 45 years.

The first Air Corps troops arrived at Ladd Field in September 1940, and soon the first B-17 Flying Fortress arrived for experimental work. The power and heating plant was completed during the winter of 1940-44, bringing heat and cheerful light to the still unfinished barracks and quarters. In January 1941, the Corps of Engineers took over construction and the forceful Col. B.B. Talley, CE, drove the work to completion. At the same time, Coast Artillery antiaircraft units arrived to winter test their weapons. Cold weather testing

### National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number 8. Significance

Page

2

continued at Ladd Field until the spring of 1942 when concern over a Japanese invasion caused the Alaska Department to request the testing be halted. The Eleventh Air Force took over the field and established an air depot for aircraft repair, service, and supply for the Alaskan Theater.

Within a few months, however, the commanding general of the Army Air Forces directed the reestablishment of cold weather testing, this time keeping the activity directly under himself. (Even earlier, Ladd Field had been fairly independent of the Alaska Department. One result of this was the envy of other units in Alaska over the high degree of refinement that went into Ladd's facilities. Most other installations were making do with tents and quonset huts.) Testing operations resumed, to be continued until well after the conclusion of World War II. A typical report summarized activity for the winter of 1942-43: "In addition to aircraft accessory equipment, tests and experiments were carried out in connection with clothing, food, motor transportation, medical research, photography and the many and varied factors in connection with Arctic operations."

#### Air Depot

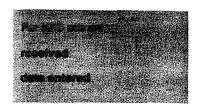
The establishment of the Air Depot at Ladd in 1942 resulted in the addition of nearly 1,000 officers and men to the garrison. Depot activities, combined with those of the Air Transport Command, resulted in the extension of the existing runway, construction of a second, and the building of additional hangars and housing. Then, with the freeing of the western Aleutians from the enemy a year later, the size of the Eleventh Air Force decreased considerably, resulting in less work for the depot. At the same time, the Air Transport Command was increasing its work load and, having taken command of Ladd Field, had the Sixth Air Depot Group disbanded and absorbed the personnel into its own activities.

#### The Russians Are Coming

The United States and the Soviet Union had discussed the concept of ferrying American-manufactured aircraft to Russia under a lend-lease program even before Pearl Harbor. In August 1941, the two nations reached an agreement in principle on the plan. Two routes were feasible: from Florida to North Africa, to Iraq and Iran, and on to Moscow, for a distance of 13,000 miles; and from Great Falls, Montana, to Fairbanks, to Siberia, and on to Moscow, for a

<sup>1.</sup> Alaska Defense Command, History of Ladd Field, 1938-44, "AAF Cold Weather Testing Detachment," p. 54. Record Group 338, Alaska Defense Command, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, MD.

### National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number 8. Significance

Page

3

distance of 7,900 miles. The Russians<sup>2</sup> were not enthusiastic about the Siberian route but, in July 1942, Premier Joseph Stalin accepted this plan.

Canadians were already building airfields in the wilderness between Edmonton, Alberta, and Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. These together with six fields in Big Alaska--Northway, Tanacross, Delta, Ladd, Galena, Nome--became the Northwest Staging Route for the delivery of the aircraft. At first, the United States wanted to turn over the planes to Russian aircrews in Siberia. Stalin, however, wishing to avoid an appearance of collaboration in the Far East, suggested that Soviet flyers accept the planes in Alaska, perhaps at Nome. Agreement was soon reached that Ladd Field would be the delivery point and that the Russians would land at Nome for refueling and repairs before crossing Bering Strait.

The U.S. Army Air Corps Ferrying Command had its origins in delivery of American aircraft to Great Britain. Early in 1942 it expanded operations by flying bombers to the South Pacific. Renamed the Air Transport Command (ATC) in June 1942, it directed its Seventh Ferrying Group to deliver the first planes to Alaska. Five A-20 Havoc attack bombers landed at Ladd Field on September 3, 1942. Next day, officers of the permanent Russian mission flew in from Siberia. On September 11, 22 P-40 fighters arrived from Montana. Finally, a contingent of Russian pilots landed at Ladd on September 24 to begin five days of transitional training before flying the new planes home.

Americans found the Russians difficult students at first. The language barrier was only part of the problem. Some planes were too small for two men and the Americans gave instructions on the ground then watched nervously as the Russians took to the air. Also, the Russians appeared to have orders not to fraternize too much with American officers and not at all with American women (photographs of Russians at American dances suggest that any such orders were later relaxed). For the most part, the Russians were polite, well-behaved, and under strict discipline. In the beginning, they complained some about the quality of American planes, perhaps suspicious of products from a capitalist country. (Some Russians may have had a capitalistic heart; it is reported that few planes reached Siberia without a cargo of silk stockings, cosmetics, fishing tackle, cigarettes, or toys.) With the passage of time,

<sup>2.</sup> During World War II, Americans preferred the terms "Russia" and "Russians" over "Soviet Union" and Soviets."

<sup>3.</sup> Galena Field, between Fairbanks and Nome, was an alternate jumping-off point for Siberia or for emergency landings.

### National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8. Significance

Page

4

however, differences smoothed out and, by 1944, Russia was favorably impressed with the quality and quantity of American aircraft. Soviet flyers and mechanics had free run of Ladd Field and, after the severely cold winter of 1942-43 that was made worse by inadequate facilities, took over many of the new hangars and shops erected in 1943.

The Alsib route witnessed the comings and goings of more than air crews. As early as September 1941, Corps of Engineers Col. B.B. Talley, flying to Nome on an inspection trip, spotted two large (American-made) Russian seaplanes in a lagoon twenty miles east of Nome. That night he met the Russians—a general and 42 staff members—who were en route to the United States on a military mission. Throughout the war, Ladd Field played host to many dignitaries from both nations, including Ambassador Andrei Gromyko and Foreign Minister V.M. Molotov from the Soviet Union, and Wendell L. Wilkie and Vice President Henry A. Wallace of the United States.

The Air Transport Command took over Ladd Field in October 1943, having already assumed command of Galena, Big Delta, Tanacross, and Northway. In March 1944 alone the amount of air freight handled at Ladd amounted to 586 tons, and 288 planes were delivered to Russia. By September 1945, when the Russian mission left Alaska, 7,930 aircraft had been delivered to the Soviets by way of the Alsib Movement.

On November 1, 1945, the Air Transport Command transfered Ladd Field back to the Eleventh Air force. Fifteen years later, on January 1, 1961, the Department of the Air Force transferred Ladd Air Force Base to the Department of the Army. The Department renamed the now historic field Fort Jonathan M. Wainwright, for the hero of Corregidor.

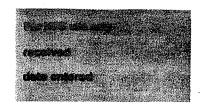
<sup>4.</sup> B.B. Talley, Daily Log, 1941-1943, entry for September 1, 1941.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See separate sheet.

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11. For	m Prepared By			
name/title	Erwin N. Thompson, Histori	ian	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
organization	Denver Service Center, NPS		date April	18, 1984
street & number	755 Parfet Street		telephone	(303) 234-4509
city or town	Lakewood	,	state	Colorado 80225
12. Sta	te Historic Pre	servation	Office	r Certification
The evaluated sig	nificance of this property within	the state is:		
-	nationalstate	local		
665), I hereby nor	d State Historic Preservation Offic ninate this property for inclusion criteria and procedures set forth l	in the National Registe	er and certify t	ition Act of 1966 (Public Law 89– hat it has been evaluated
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title				date
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i hereby ce	rtify that this property is included	in the National Registe	er	
Vanna al tha	Noticeal Pagista			date
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Chief of Regis	STRATION .			

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number 9. Bibliography

Page

2

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### National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number

9. Bibliography

Page

3

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#### 10. Geographical Data

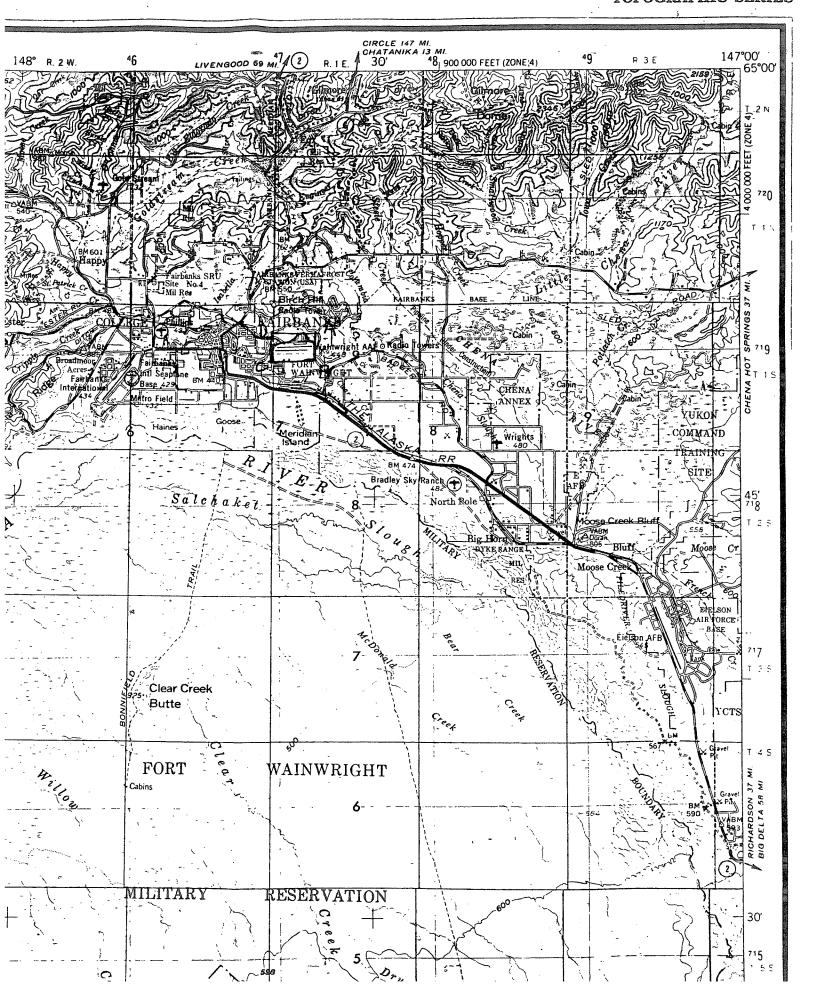
#### Verbal boundary description

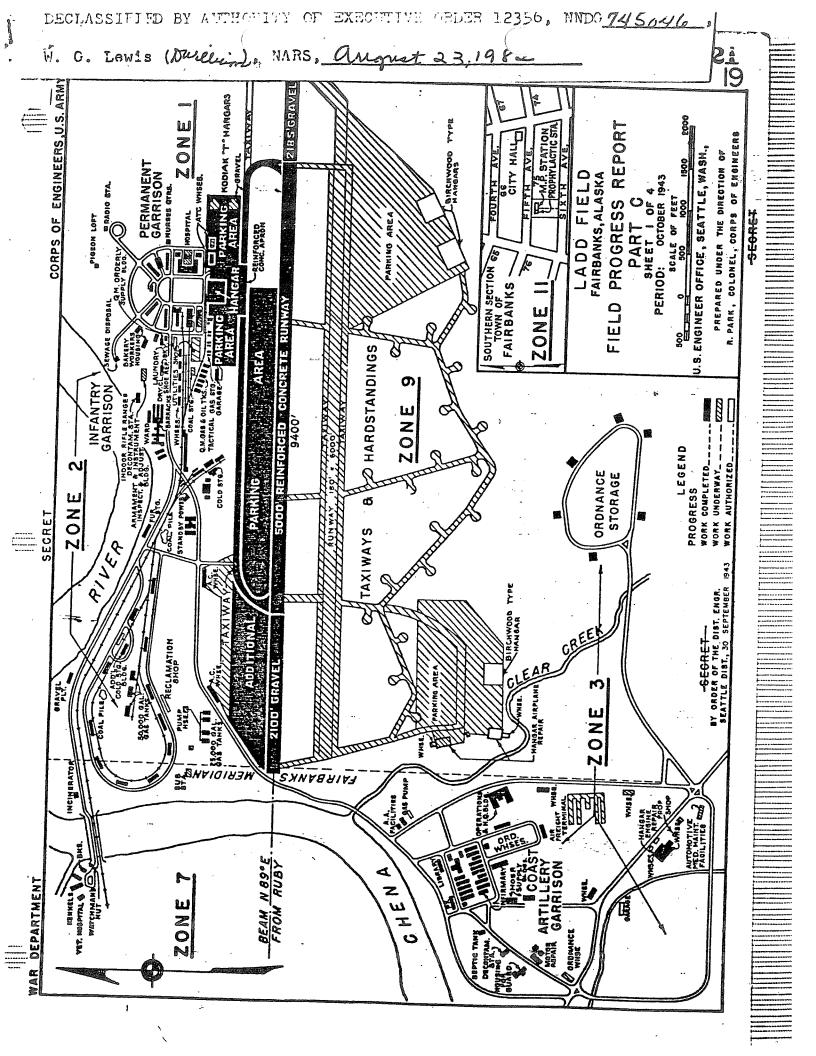
Starting at the west junction of Gaffney Road and Marks Road, then following the horseshoe curve of Marks Road to its east junction with Gaffney Road, then continuing due south along a road to the northwest corner of Building 1541, then due east 750 feet, then due south along the east ends of Buildings 1543 and 1542 to the north edge of a plane parking area, then due east to Ketchum Road, then south on Ketchum Road to its junction with Montgomery Road, then generally west along Montgomery Road to its junction with Meridian Road, then generally north and north northwest along Meridian Road to its junction with Gaffney Road, then following the northeast and east northeast curve of Gaffney Road 1,500 feet to a point due west of the north side of the north taxiway, then due east along the north side of the north taxiway to its junction with a paved aircraft parking area, then following the boundary of the parking area north, then east, then north, then east to the southeast corner of Building 1565, then due north along a road to Gaffney Road and the point of beginning.

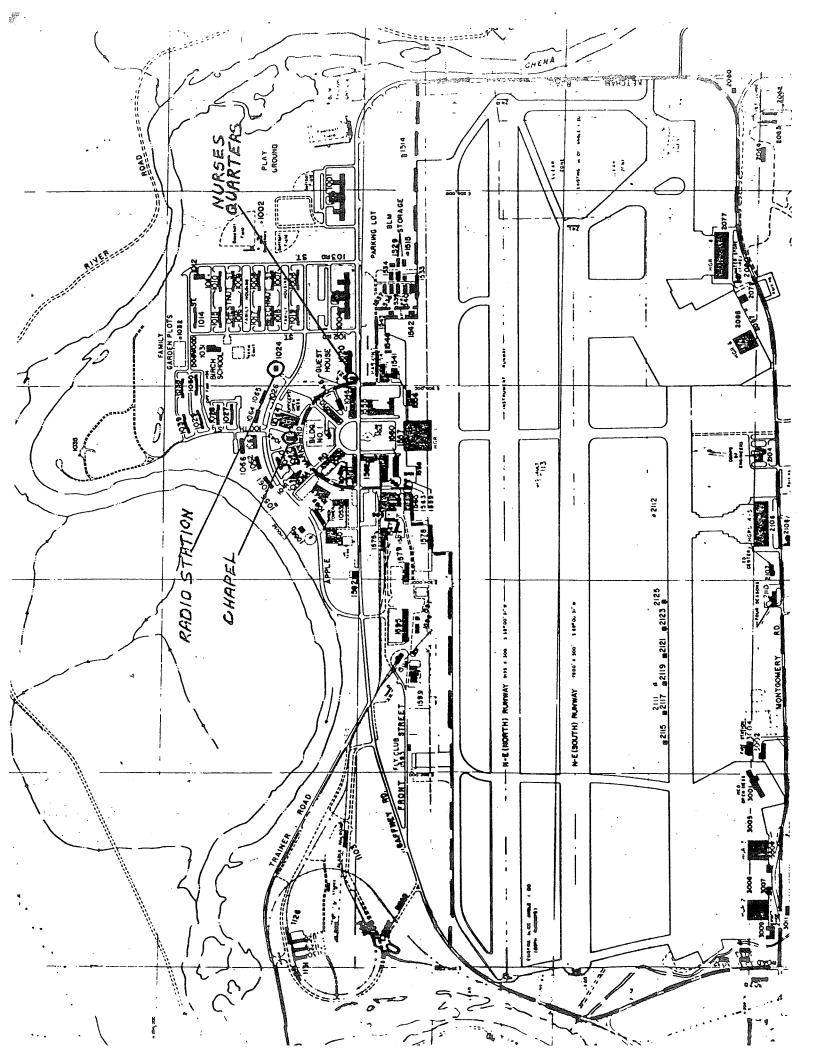
These boundaries contain nearly all the historic area of Ladd Field, 1938-1945, including the permanent garrison, industrial area, hospital, hangars, and runways.

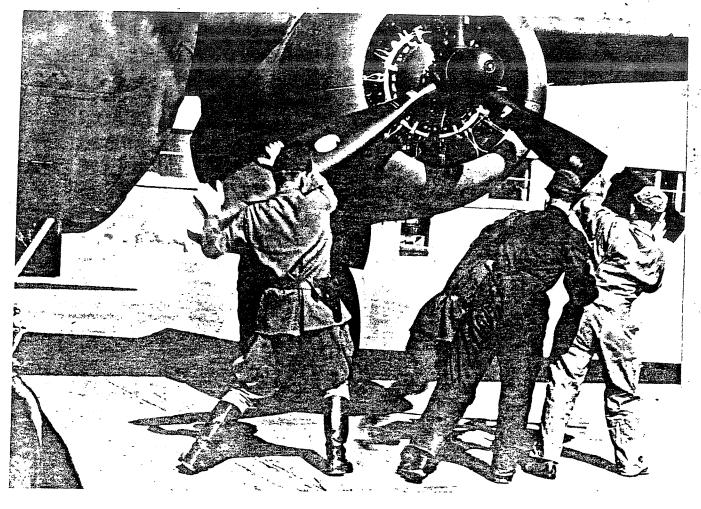
Structures within the boundaries that do not contribute significantly to the historic setting include Buildings 1556, 1558, 1559, 1563, 1546, 2085, 2097, 2079, 2080, 2104, 2107, 2110, 3004, 3002, 3001, 3007, 3009, 3031, 3032, and 3033.

Three structures that contribute to the historic setting are in the permanent garrison area but are outside the above boundaries: Building 1021, Nurses' Quarters; Building 1024, Radio Station; and Building 1043, Chapel. Their boundaries are their outlines.









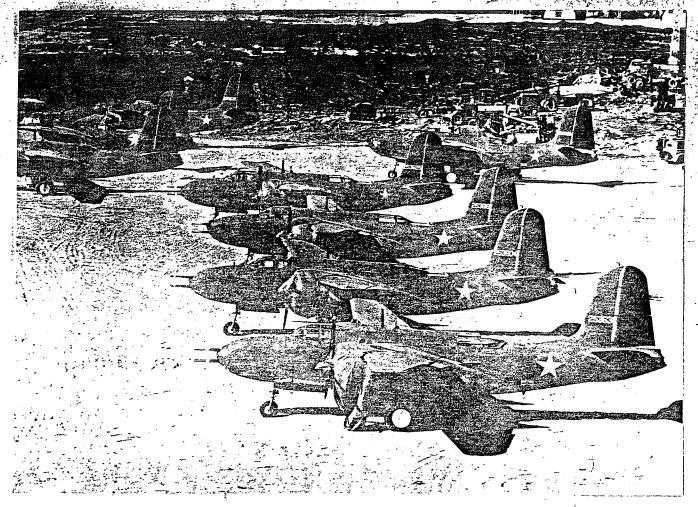
1. Soviet airmen prepare an A-20 attack bomber for flight at Ladd Field, World War II.

Courtesy, Smithsonian Institution and U.S. Air Force



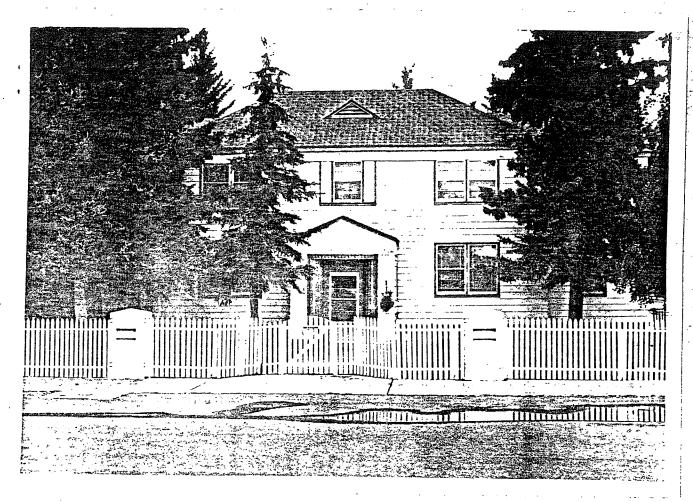
2. P-39 Airacobra fighters in foreground at Ladd Field readying for flight to Siberia, July 9, 1944. This aircraft was a favorite of Russian flyers. The Red Stars were painted on in Montana.

Courtesy, Smithsonian Institution and U.S. Air Force



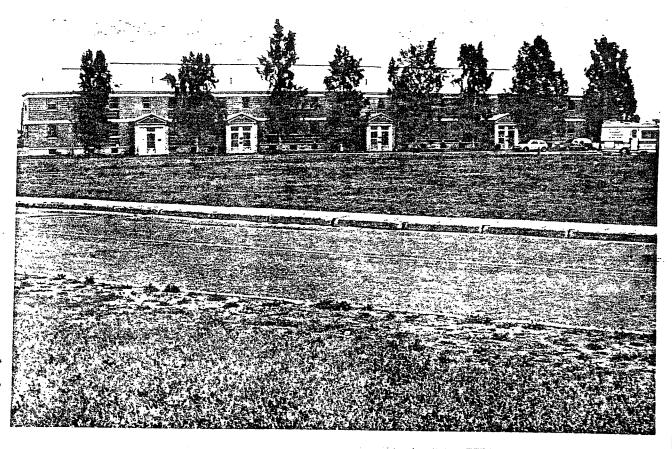
3. Russian pilots also liked the A-20 Havoc bombers. The nose cannon were effective against German tanks. Note construction in background. Ladd Field, World War II.

Courtesy, Smithsonian Institution and U.S. Air Force



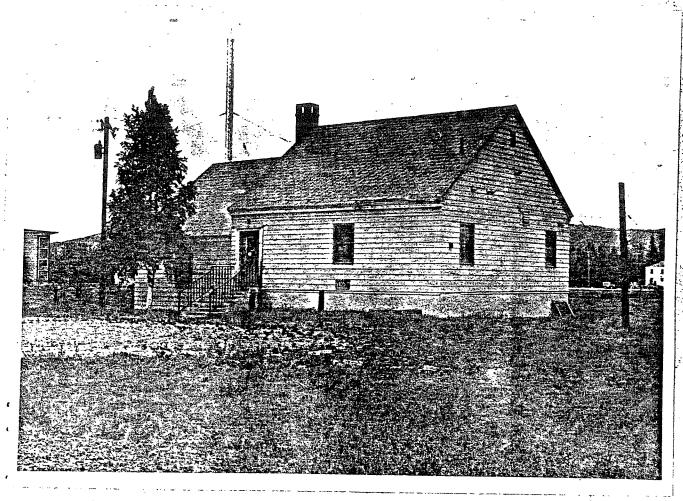
4. Commanding officer's quarters at Ladd Field. Being independent of the Alaska Defense Command, the airmen at Ladd acquired finer facilities than other Alaskan army posts.

Photo by E.N. Thompson



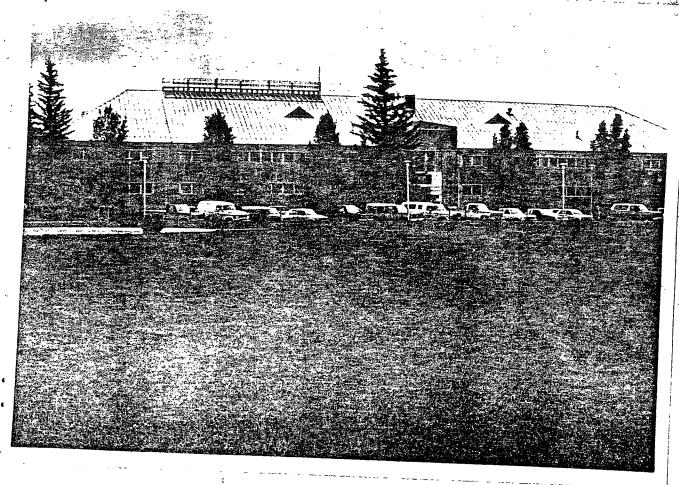
5. One of three apartment houses at Ladd Field for officers. Soon after Pearl Harbor, all military families in the Alaskan Theater were evacuated to the United States.

Photo by E.N. Thompson



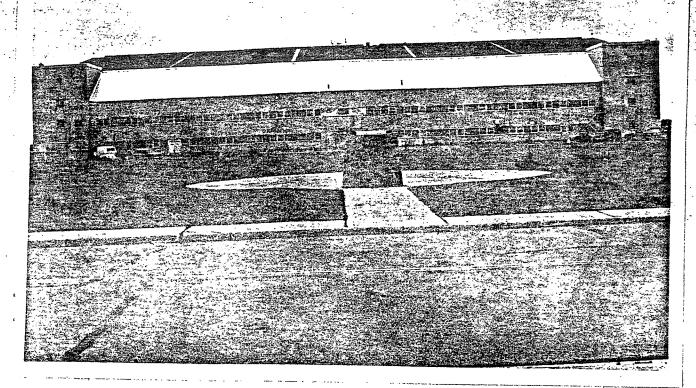
6. Radio station at Ladd Field. Local tradition holds that the commanding officer of the Soviet mission at the field lived in this building.

Photo by E.N. Thompson



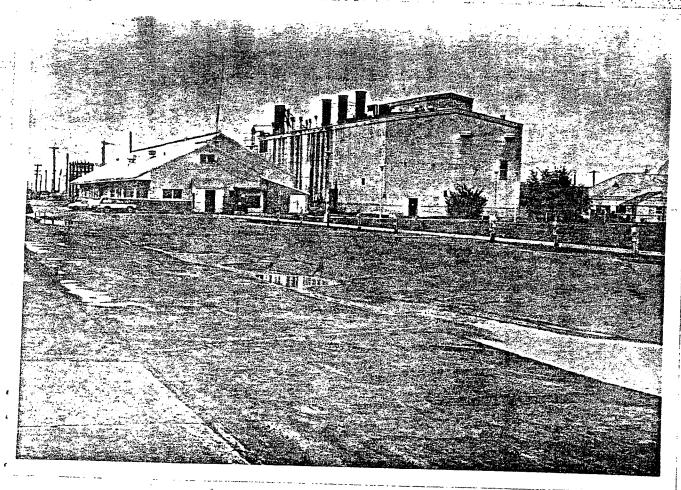
7. Ladd Field's second hospital, built in 1943 when the movement of lend-lease planes to Russia increased greatly. The Bureau of Land Management occupies the large U-Shaped structure today.

Photo by E.N. Thompson



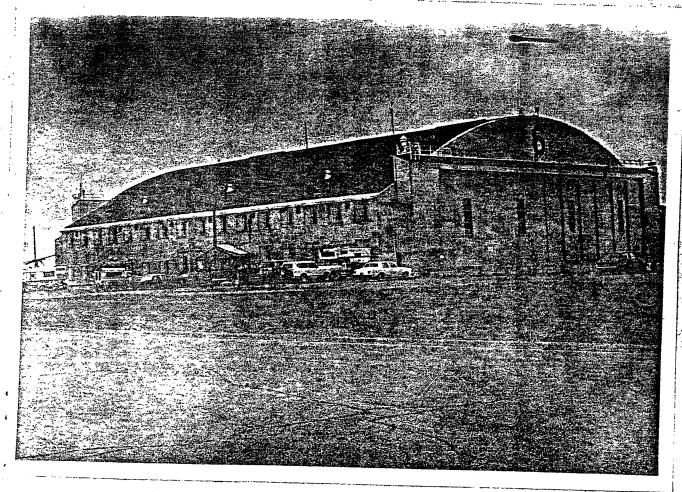
8. Hangar No. 1 at Ladd Field. It was the field's only hangar from 1940 to 1943. In the foreground is a memorial marker to Lt. Gen. Jonathan Wainwright for whom the present-day army post is named.

Photo by E.N. Thompson



9. On the left is the 1941-43 "community building". Next to it stands the all-important power and heating plant. A portion of an early administration building appears on the right.

Photo by E.N. Thompson



10. One of three Birchwood-type hangars built on the south side of Ladd Field in 1943. The Army uses it today for helicopters.

Photo by E.N. Thompson

#### INDEX TO LADD FIELD

- A. CHAPEL (1034)
- B. BIRCHWOOD HANGAR (2085)
- C. KODIAK T-HANGAR (1542)
- D. NURSES QUARTERS (1021)
- E. HANGAR NO. 1 (1557)
- F. HOSPITAL (1555)
- G. BOQ (1045)
- H. C.O. QUARTERS (1)
- I. RADIO STATION (1024)
- J. 12 APARTMENTS-NCO (1049)
- K. COMMUNITY BUILDING (1562)
- L. POWER PLANT (1561)
- M. BIRCHWOOD HANGAR (3008)
- N. BIRCHWOOD HANGAR (3005)